

## **SOUTH WEST CROSS COUNTRY CHAMPIONSHIPS & INTER COUNTIES** **BICTON COLLEGE – SUNDAY 4<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2009**

Dave Varney reports:

With one Champion, a silver medalist & two third places plus six teams in the top three, Cornwall County Athletics squads enjoyed one of their most successful outings in the South West Cross Country Championships & Inter Counties at Bicton College on Sunday.

There were fears that the hard overnight frost & low temperatures, which cancelled many sporting events, would make the going difficult but apart from a few low lying sections, the condition underfoot, was reasonably firm, albeit that athletes had to contend with the difficult rutted areas which caused some twisted ankles.

Setting off in the opening race, Under 13 Charlotte Cayton-Smith set her stall out from the start, leading a small group which broke free of the remaining runners. Her superior strength on the final hill climb to the finish straight gained her the advantage & her first Championship Title, just the start she was looking for with the major Championships all crammed into the next 10 weeks.

With Melissa Keveren at 12th, Finlay Bray breathing down her neck at 13th & Yvonne Chart 19th, these four took the bronze team medals. Tamsin Gummow, out to make the team for the Nationals in March did enough with her finish at 16th.

Dan Nash has been keeping Cornwall's leading Under 15 Boy, Conor Robinson on his toes recently with some close contests. With Conor unable to make the Championships, Dan took up the mantle of the County number one, producing a superb performance to take the Silver medal.

Gareth Smith, has emerged as a top cross country athlete again this winter, alongside his rugby skills. Finishing at 8th, his inclusion for the National Inter Counties plus the return of Conor & a sick Harry Allen could make this quartet one of the best County teams at Nottingham, especially as Tom Rawet hit form again to finish 16th, as did Hobie Martin at 20th & the likely inclusion of Max Holdsworth, all capable of breaking into the four scoring positions.

The two combined Under 20 & Senior teams provided the other individual medal placings. The first from Ollie Shilston who had about the closest finish of the day after a see-sawing battle with the Devon athlete. This pair plus silver medalist, Simon Plummer from Wiltshire, had to view the rapidly disappearing back of Devon's Kevin Heyward who finished almost one minute ahead of the rest.

The medals could have gone to any of the next three, with positions changing & although Tom Merson had been gaining an advantage over Shilston on the hills, Ollie managed to cling on for the final challenge & even over the final 20m, the two kept nudging ahead but it was the Cornishman's determination that won the day, literally on the line & the Bronze medal.

Mixed in with the Senior Women, Under 20, Bethany Alston had to rely on athlete recognition & a different numbering sequence to know where she was placed in her own age group. Jessica Burns from Plymouth vying for the top three overall position and Naomi Taschimowitz from Taunton are well known to Beth & she could keep them in her sights. Around her were the top Senior athletes which helped to focus on her own performance, one which kept her well ahead of the fourth Under 20 & a deserved bronze medal.

Of the team placings, the under 13 Boys result was particularly pleasing, their silver medals came from some high packing from the scoring quartet of Sam Lane de Courtin at 7th, Tom Rogers 10th, Oscar Holdsworth 11th & Sam Hutchinson at 15th.

Other top ten placings came from Dean Scott, just outside the Under 17 medal position at 4th, training partner, April Hogg in the Under 15 Girls at 5th, Chris Dobson, the leading Under 20 Man at 6th, Esme Kerton & Nicola George, both 8th in the Under 17 & 20 Women's events, respectively.

The other team medals went to under 15's, April Hogg 5th, Freya Glover 15th, Dulcie Atkinson 17th & Megan Davis 19th, taking Silver; Under 20 Women, Bethany Alston 3rd, Nicola George, 8th, Heidi Cottam 15th & Amy Colwill 16th for Bronze; Under 17 Men, Dean Scott 4th, James Waldie 11th, Jacob Landers 12th & James Barker 15th, taking Silver; Senior Men Ollie Shilston 3rd, Chris McQuillen-Wright 18th, Chris Mulroy 20th, Pete Ellis 22nd, John Telford 24th & James Stevens 49th, also Silver.